



Report - NYC Air Quality Update for Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Committee 27.11.2025

Purpose of Report – To update the committee on the latest air quality issues in North Yorkshire following the submission (and acceptance) of the council's 2025 Air Quality Annual Status Report (2025 ASR) to DEFRA. A question has also been submitted as to why the Smoke Control Area in Harrogate does not cover Starbeck and the south-east of Harrogate and Knaresborough.

DEFRA Submission Deadline – 30th June 2025. **Accepted** – 7th November 2025

The 2025 ASR can be found on the website via the link below:

[Local air quality management | North Yorkshire Council](#)

2025 ASR Summary - The North Yorkshire Council Annual Status Report (ASR) (2025) is a statutory document that presents the air quality monitoring data from throughout 2024 and looks at corresponding data trends over the last 5 years. The data is presented in context with the geographical make-up of the county and recent measures undertaken that may affect air quality, such as highway improvements and housing developments. The report also updates the position regarding the current Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's). 4 out of 8 existing AQMA's were revoked last year after meeting the compliance criteria set by DEFRA.

In 2024 air quality monitoring by NYC's Scientific Team was restricted to measuring nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). The type of monitoring undertaken, and location selection criteria, are dictated by technical guidance issued by DEFRA. The presentation of the data can appear complex, but the report follows a format dictated by DEFRA to aid comparisons between different local authority areas. In general, the report shows that pollution levels in North Yorkshire continue to fall, although NO₂ levels in the Selby AQMA remain perilously close to the government objective level. There were, however, no breaches of the government objective level for NO₂ within North Yorkshire.

The 4 AQMA's currently in North Yorkshire are in the following locations:

1. Knaresborough - Bond End,
2. Harrogate - Wetherby Road, TO REVOKE
3. Selby - The Crescent / New Street,
4. Staithes – top of the village.

The AQMA on Wetherby Road, Harrogate has had compliant levels of NO₂ for over 5 years, 3 of those at 10 % below the objective. In accordance with the DEFRA Technical Guidance, therefore, the council is revoking this AQMA. This will leave only 3 AQMAs in North Yorkshire (compared to 8 at the beginning of last year), which reflects the continued improvement in air quality in the county. This revocation will require the council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to be updated to reflect the change.

Table 2.2 of the report contains an update on the measures undertaken across the county to address air quality issues. The council's Air Quality Steering Group meets quarterly to review such measures and enables interdepartmental discussions to take place on how best to approach pollution reductions in the most affected areas. It is a statutory obligation under the Environment Act 2021 for all relevant departments of the council to contribute to this process and the group currently consists of the members from:

Environmental Health

Trading Standards

Public Health

Climate Change

Licensing

Development Control

Transport Planning

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

The steering group is now beginning to work on an Air Quality Strategy for North Yorkshire, which will reflect the council's holistic approach to continuing to improve air quality across all service area remits.

The principal source of pollution within North Yorkshire remains NO₂ from traffic pollution, although other sources are mentioned such as PM₁₀ dust particles associated with quarrying and cement manufacture. These and other potentially polluting industrial sites are also regulated by the Scientific Team via permits issued under the separate Local Authority Pollution Prevention and Control regime.

Despite pollution levels in North Yorkshire being relatively low compared to other areas of the UK, The Environment Act 2021 places a duty to look at continuous improvement, particularly in regard to PM_{2.5}, which are very fine particles that can enter the bloodstream and deposit heavy metals and toxins that can accumulate in the major organs of the body. The very young, old and infirm are particularly susceptible to these particles. The Scientific team are very keen, therefore, to work with colleagues and partners on projects across the county which will potentially reduce pollutant levels. The team have recently purchased 6 real-time air quality monitors to assess the progress of such projects and these are now being installed at strategic locations across the county.

It is to be noted that although the ASR is produced by the Scientific team it relies significantly on contributions from other departments to report on their actions relating to air quality. Throughout the LGR transformation process, the Scientific team has continued to engage with other departments which are increasingly pursuing the opportunities for integrated working offered by being one, unitary council.

As well as the UK statutory air quality objectives, due regard is also given to the latest World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline limits. Although these are much more stringent than the UK limits, with regard to NO₂, levels are already complying with the initial interim target value, and it is to be hoped that further improvements in air quality can be made for the benefit of all the residents of North Yorkshire.

Lack of Smoke Control Areas in Starbeck and Knaresborough - Historically Smoke Control Areas were declared due to the then prevalence of domestic solid fuel burning to provide heating and hot water. Where the housing density and proportion of properties burning solid fuel was such to concentrate the smoke at levels deemed prejudicial to health a Smoke Control Area was declared.

The Smoke Control Areas in Harrogate were declared from around 1980 and now cover a large proportion of the western part of the town. [Search results - In My Area - Harrogate Area - North Yorkshire Council](#)

At that time mains gas was replacing solid fuel as the preferred means of heating across the whole town and air quality had improved to such a degree that that Smoke Control Areas were no longer deemed necessary when it came to review Starbeck and the south-east of Harrogate.

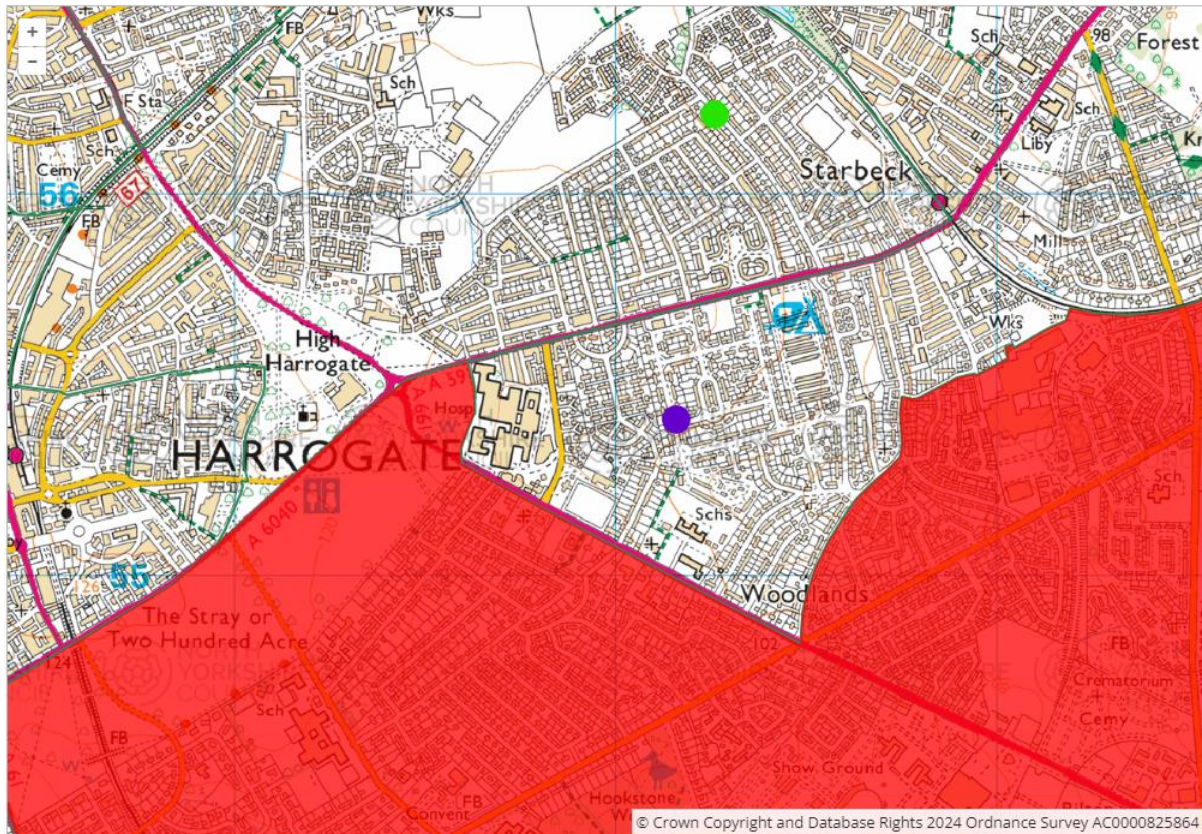
Smoke Control Area restrictions only apply to smoke that comes out of a chimney such as from domestic fires, stoves or commercial pizza ovens. They do not apply in the case of bonfires, barbecues etc. It is important to assess the cause of any problem identified to affect the appropriate solution. Smoke complaints from any source can be investigated as a potential Statutory Nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 regardless of the presence of a Smoke Control Area. This is the approach more commonly taken when investigating bonfire complaints although it can apply to smoke from chimneys in areas where there is not a Smoke Control Area, if the smoke has a negative impact on the use or enjoyment of an individual's property.

In determining whether further Smoke Control Areas are necessary, an assessment similar to that outlined above would apply as well as a consultation process with affected residents. The council would first have to establish whether there might be a breach of the UK Air Quality objectives and whether the cause would be mitigated by a smoke control area. Smoke is now measured in terms of particulate matter – PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}.

In addition to an extensive network of diffusion tubes monitoring nitrogen dioxide from traffic pollution, some particulate monitoring is already taking place in the Harrogate area, and more is planned. A monitor has recently been installed on Station Parade and although this is again mainly to assess nitrogen dioxide from traffic pollution it does also measure particulate matter.

The map below shows the Stray and Hookstone wards in red. The green dot shows the location of a monitor which was in place on Kingsley Road for just under 2 years which measured nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. The data obtained demonstrated compliance with the UK objective values for PM₁₀. In May 2025 the council therefore relocated this monitor to the Air Quality Management Area at Bond End, Knaresborough which was declared for nitrogen dioxide exceedances associated with traffic pollution. Again, as well as nitrogen dioxide, the monitor measures particulate matter. The purple dot is where DEFRA have located a monitor which specifically monitors PM_{2.5} particulates on the corner of Fairfax Avenue and

Hargrove Road. The council are also installing a monitor at Starbeck railway crossing to monitor both nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}). Should any of these monitors signify an issue then the council will look at this issue further. Until then there is no evidence to suggest that any area in Harrogate is in breach of the UK air quality objective for particulates.



Map of Harrogate showing location of DEFRA monitor (purple) and former location of NYC monitor. The Stray and Hookstone wards are shown in red for reference purposes.

As mentioned, from May this year particulate monitoring (an indicator for smoke) has been undertaken at Bond End, Knaresborough and to date there is no evidence of a breach of the UK air quality objective for particulate matter. The lack of evidence in the form of smoke complaints received by the council relating to domestic solid fuel burning would also indicate that a Smoke Control Area is not currently required in Knaresborough. The council has also not received any contacts from the NHS regarding increased hospital admissions relating to this issue.

An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was declared across Bond End, Knaresborough in 2010 for traffic-related nitrogen dioxide levels exceeding the UK Air Quality objective level. Levels of nitrogen dioxide have since improved and dropped below this level for the last five years and the council hopes to be in a position to revoke this AQMA next year.

There are plans to install a monitor at the level crossing in Starbeck to measure nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter, principally due to concerns relating to emissions from stationary traffic. Street Lighting engineers from the council are to install a column to facilitate the monitor. Traffic related nitrogen dioxide is also measured across Harrogate and Knaresborough using diffusion tubes which are replaced every month. The results can be found in the 2025 ASR.

Unfortunately, the council only has 9 monitors that are capable of measuring particulate matter. 3 of these monitors are / will be located within the former Harrogate Borough - 2 in Harrogate (in addition to the DEFRA PM_{2.5} monitor) and 1 in Knaresborough, leaving 6 for the rest of the county. That demonstrates a significant resource devoted to this locality.

Although there is currently no intention to create more Smoke Control Areas, North Yorkshire Council acknowledges that wood burning stoves are increasing in popularity and that they have the capacity to increase particulate matter levels across the county. In addition to enforcing controls on the sale of solid fuels, the council has placed best practice guidance on its website regarding the use of open fires and wood-burning stoves. The council also takes part in Clean Air Night, a campaign specifically related to the issue of smoke from wood burning stoves and we are working with our Communications team as to how this can be better publicised. Environmental Health staff also engage with DEFRA which constantly looks to review the legislation and guidance surrounding domestic solid fuel burning.

In general, air quality continues to improve in North Yorkshire and more information can be found on the Council's website. [Air quality | North Yorkshire Council](#)

Should you have any questions feel free to address them to me directly.

Dr Kevin Carr
Divisional Officer – Scientific
Regulatory Services
North Yorkshire Council

Telephone: 01748 901180
Email: kevin.carr@northyorks.gov.uk